

JUSTIFICATION FOR AN EXCEPTION TO FAIR OPPORTUNITY

1. Contracting Activity: Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Office of Acquisition Operations
Technology Acquisition Center
23 Christopher Way
Eatontown, New Jersey 07724
2. Description of Action: This proposed action is for a firm-fixed price delivery order to be issued under the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) V Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC) BlueStripe FactFinder Collector License (BlueStripe) software maintenance.
3. Description of Supplies or Services: The proposed action is for brand name BlueStripe FactFinder Collector License (BlueStripe) software maintenance. BlueStripe is performance monitoring software currently in use in VA, Service Delivery and Engineering, Enterprise Operations (EO). It integrates into the operating system layer of each server and monitors all transactions between servers. It builds a live, dynamic topology of the entire server system and displays, in real time, the bottleneck path throughout a system of servers. It is also highly useful on systems that are poorly understood and poorly documented since all server communications are mapped and monitored without customization to system specifics. Unlike many other performance monitoring tools, this collector license is focused on application performance management from the operations perspective and is not focused primarily on application code. The objective of the tool is to quickly isolate the cause of a performance problem to a specific cause or component but not to analyze the code level performance. The performance monitoring is not limited to any particular programming language, such as Java or .Net, and can monitor any and all communications in and out of a server or systems of servers without prior knowledge of the existence of the communications or any dependency on the communication source. The BlueStripe software maintenance will consist of software upgrades and updates to include major releases, point releases, service releases and security releases of applicable software on a quarterly basis, and/or within 48 hours in cases in which a high risk vulnerability fix becomes available. These software licenses and updates are necessary for EO to be able to operate successfully. The maintenance is required to ensure the software remains operational. The period of performance is 12-months with two 12-month option periods. The total estimated price of the proposed action is \$ [REDACTED] inclusive of options.
4. Statutory Authority: The statutory authority permitting this exception to fair opportunity is Section 41 U.S.C 4106(c)(2) as implemented by Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Section 16.505(b)(2)(i)(B) entitled, "Only one awardee is capable of providing the supplies or services required at the level of quality required because the supplies or services ordered are unique or highly specialized."

5. Rationale Supporting Use of Authority Cited: Based on extensive market research, as described in section 8 of this justification, it was determined that limited competition is available among authorized resellers for BlueStripe software maintenance. Only BlueStripe or an authorized reseller can provide the aforementioned BlueStripe software maintenance. Any other source would require access to BlueStripe's proprietary code in order to provide the maintenance. Specifically this code is required to ensure all services are properly configured and the upgrades and updates are properly pushed through to the currently fielded software. Since BlueStripe is the only collector license software that meets VA's unique functional requirements of performance monitoring for all transactions in and out of a server regardless of their association with an application and without respect to application code or application server type, the collector license software maintenance is only available through BlueStripe. VA has a functional requirement to monitor all traffic in a server system regardless of its origin, protocol, or prior knowledge of its existence. BlueStripe software maintenance is the only software maintenance that will allow VA to continue to isolate performance issues at the operational layer without respect to specific application code issues or performance. In addition, a prior implementation of BlueStripe already exists in EO. Acquisition of a different collector license software, even if another one existed with qualifications that met VA's stated functional requirements, would require a completely separate infrastructure to support the different product along with completely separate EO staffing. Separate staffing would multiply the support costs for the monitoring and, if BlueStripe was abandoned in favor of this different product, EO would need to purchase new collector licenses. No other collector license software is compatible with or interoperable with the existing BlueStripe collector license due to BlueStripe's proprietary database structures, protocols and software application programming interfaces. This lack of interoperability, such as the ability of a different vendor's agent to communicate with another vendor's data collector, is standard throughout the performance monitoring industry. BlueStripe Collector License software maintenance is the only software maintenance that meets the Government's requirements.
6. Efforts to Obtain Competition: Market research was conducted, details of which are in section 8 of this justification. This effort did not yield any other products that can meet the Government's requirements. It was determined, however, that limited competition is viable among authorized resellers for the required software maintenance. In accordance with FAR 5.301 and 16.505(b)(2)(ii)(D), the action will be synopsisized and this justification will be made publicly available on the Federal Business Opportunities Page within 14 days after award. In addition, this justification will be posted with the solicitation to notify all SEWP vendors.
7. Actions to Increase Competition: The Government will continue to conduct market research to ascertain if there are changes in the marketplace that would enable future actions to be fully competed or if other software maintenance packages have the capability or interoperability to provide the aforementioned maintenance.

8. Market Research: BlueStripe is a commercial off-the-shelf collector license package currently in use at VA. When conducting market research in July 2016, the Government's technical experts reviewed similar performance monitoring software maintenance to ascertain if these items could meet EO's requirements. Specifically, the Government's technical experts reviewed similar companies/organizations, such as Computer Associates (CA), BMC, Dell, and Arcturus Technologies, in the performance monitoring area. In addition, the Government's technical experts researched Forrester Research, Gartner Research, and conducted research on technical monitoring websites and web-based forums related to the performance monitoring requirements/needs stated in section 5 to identify potential performance monitoring solutions that could meet the Government's requirements. All of the software maintenance researched (CA Application Performance Monitoring, BMC's Performance Monitoring, Arcturus Applicare and Dell Foglight plus other research firm cited products) did not show any ability to meet VA's requirements without access to the proprietary code as discussed in section 5 of this justification. Also the other brand name software researched from these companies was unable to meet the unique form, fit and functional requirements of the VA's existing BlueStripe software's performance monitoring for all transactions in and out of a server, regardless of their association with an application and without respect to application code or application server type. All of the similar software researched either were application-focused and required application agents or network-focused without visibility into specific server to server transactions. The VA requires the ability to monitor all transactions (known and unknown) regardless of their source in and out of a server or system of servers; this is a mandatory requirement that no other comparable product other than BlueStripe is capable of providing to the VA. Additionally, none of these other collector licenses' software maintenance could meet VA's interoperability and compatibility requirements as outlined in section 5 of this document, due to BlueStripe's proprietary database structures, protocols and software programming interfaces. The lack of interoperability/ability to communicate with another data collector is standard throughout the performance monitoring industry. Based on the above, only BlueStripe collector license software maintenance meets all of the Government's requirements.

9. Other Facts: N/A